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## **Air Defense of the USSR**

**Interagency Intelligence Memorandum  
Summary**

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NI IIM 85-10008

December 1985

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AIR DEFENSE OF THE USSR

SUMMARY

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## SCOPE NOTE

This Memorandum examines current and future Soviet air defense weapon systems, the air defense command structure, the operation of air defense forces, and projects several possible force sizes and rates of modernization.

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This IIM was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs. Major contributions to the drafting of this IIM were provided by the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Foreign Technology Division of the US Air Force, and the Missile and Space Intelligence Center of the US Army.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

The Soviets will continue a steady modernization, replacing or improving many of their current air defense weapons and support systems with new or modernized systems by the mid-1990s:

- The firepower of Soviet air defenses will grow during the next decade as more capable systems are fielded.
- Soviet ground-based air defenses will become increasingly mobile, thus complicating suppression and avoidance tactics. [REDACTED]

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The complexity of the air defense task, both in the size of the land area to defend and the continually increasing technology of the aerodynamic threat, forces the Soviets to continually expand and modernize their capabilities. The numbers of military personnel involved and weapon systems deployed for air defense are several orders of magnitude greater than those of any other nation. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets have undertaken a series of actions intended to enhance their air defense capabilities, including:

- In 1980, reorganizing their air defense command structure for the apparent purpose of increasing its flexibility to maximize the use of all elements of air defense—both strategic and tactical assets—during all phases of conflict. A full understanding of the impact of this reorganization is still developing.
- Making significant upgrades in their control and communications systems to be able to better manage the air battle.
- Deploying the new strategic SA-10 and tactical SA-11 surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems (and soon the SA-X-12) that have improved weapon system characteristics and greater mobility. These systems will provide increased low-altitude capability.
- Increasing the low-altitude capability of their fighter force with continuing deployment of the Foxhound A and Fulcrum A and introduction of the Flanker, all of which have lookdown/shoot-down capabilities.
- Developing and deploying new ground-based equipment and airborne systems, particularly the Mainstay Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft for early warning and tracking, which will assist these new weapon systems in attacking low-altitude targets.

These newer, more technologically advanced systems, although expected to be deployed in fewer numbers than older systems, will enhance the Soviets' overall capabilities. We are uncertain, however, about the pace of this modernization effort. [REDACTED]

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